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SALVATION BY NATURAL FORCES

Every man reflects the current of his time;
few reflect upon it. Fewer still see its gen-
eral drift.

Humanity as mass; composition of the forces known as human passions; velocity; momentum—whither?

That is the central problem of human existence. In our own day this problem is assuming a form the import of which grows only the more disquieting the more clearly its characteristic features come to clear definition.

Of these characteristic features the most impressive is the one which brings out in boldest relief what may very well be called the primal fact of human nature. This primal fact is: that the basis of all pleasurable experience is the sense of power. It is precisely the sense of power that constitutes the immediate assurance of one's own reality. I would, above all things, *be*. All dread sums itself up in the "dread of falling into nought." Conscious nothingness is the acme of agony. The torment of absolute zero conscious of itself would be the fitting antithesis of that measureless joy, destitute of which absolute Reality in the full fruition of its infinite work is inconceivable. So, likewise, each individual human mind, so far as it is really creative, looks from moment to moment on the outcome of its own productive acts and with exultation cries out: "Behold, it is good!" After "I think, therefore I am," comes: I am, therefore, I rejoice.

Nevertheless, as a bitter-sweet adage (supposed to be Celtic) assures us: "the most formidable enemy of the good is the better." Every human achievement is measured. And measured success is also measured, or measurable, failure.

Contentment, then, not satisfaction, is at best the lot of man. Content one may be with present achievement. He may even be promotionally satisfied with measureless prospect of new contentments through further achievements. But "satisfied" so as to say to the present moment: "Stay"—never!

In all which there is the implication of never-ending struggle. But struggle itself is implication not merely of power, but of power which is limited. In which fact also there is ground of disquiet, even of keen foretaste of the sense of nullity brought to focus through vivid fear of failure. And, the more intense the struggle, the more literally "bitter" it must be. Nay, the very hope of success becomes feverish, diseased, permeated with pain.

And that is precisely the character of the struggle in which the life of the present generation is more and more completely merging. In grimdest sense of the term we are struggling for existence. Not, indeed, any longer as individuals, each in his own way, and with something of substantial independence, forcing from nature his own bare subsistence; but in masses, under a "boss," striving each to keep his head above the surging waves of competition; striving also to escape the treason-whirl of secret eddies ever and anon set going by mere caprice of favoritism, or even from simple vulgar malice.

This new world of ours, in truth, is scarcely yet a hundred years old. Ours is the Age of Steam; the Electric Era; the Age of Might. We are in full swing of attaining knowledge more exact, more minute, more comprehensive, of the Laws of Nature. And through our progressive intellectual mastery of the laws of nature we are discovering the way of the practical mastery of the forces of nature. Science is Reason blazing the way for the march of the conquering Will. The dreaded gods of primitive natural man are becoming the mere docile servants of modern supernatural man. Shall we not then exult in our new sense of power?

"We?" That means a multitude, a mass. "Exult?" That is an act possible only to an individual, not to a "mass." Exultation is for me a state of mind possible only on condition of deepening sense on my part of the reality of my own individual being. Only in so far as, directly or indirectly, I see in the work of the "mass" increased security, increased wealth, of my own individual selfhood, only in so far can I find in that work the slightest motive for genuine exultation.

"Mass?" The term itself is ambiguous; and that to a de-

gree not less than sinister. There is not merely the mass of workers; there is also the mass of the product in which their mutually-helpful work is continuously resulting.

Suppose some one of the mass of workers is morally able, and immorally willing, to seize upon and appropriate to himself the total mass of the product. In such case what occasion have the other individuals for exultation in the splendor of the results of the splendidly-organized power displayed by the total mass of workers?

And this opens the way for us to notice that all crimes may be grouped in two mutually-complementary classes. First, there are the crimes which have their motive in greed. Secondly, there are crimes which have their motive in resentment. And these are complementary the one of the other.

Along with which let us range in order in our minds the following facts more or less familiar to every one: (1) There is the marvelous rapidity with which we are mastering the forces of nature; (2) There is the consequent grouping of men in vast masses, to work like machines, with machines; (3) There is the rapidly-increasing solidarity of the total product of the labor thus brought under the control of an always-lessening few; (4) It is thus made possible for just this diminishing few to exercise an always increasingly dictatorial power in respect of the distribution of the product of the united labor of all.

From such mountains of power, upheaved in our modern industrially convulsive era, the Messiahs of finance have been shown vast economic empires, with the assurance to each: "All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." And what one of them has not in fact yielded?

In a word, the new era stands apart from all otherer as in the history of the world. It is the era of that natural supernaturalism which consists in human control of the forces of nature. It is thus the era of dazzling miracles performed by man in the way of material production, and therefore the era of overwhelming temptation. In their own eyes men have become human gods (*hommes-dieux*). Under glamor of which idea the age has adopted for its actual practical guidance the Creed of

Greed, with vast combinations of all instrumentalities as the mode of its application.

What wonder, then, that mere individual crime, as commonly understood, should sink into relative insignificance in face of the colossal corporate crimes which mark the new era? Though, be it well understood, the so-called corporate crimes are nothing else than offenses of colossal proportions committed by individual men under cover of corporate robes.

Note further — fact familiar to all — that those who are directing the combinations of capital and of energy, natural and human, reach out and control in always increasing measure the whole range of the media of human existence. Along with which there is the ceaseless, tireless, victorious search for new and ever new ways through which the revised version of the Creed of Greed can be effectually applied in the turning of the new media away from their one valid purpose of increasing the welfare of all, and in forcing those media into the service of whoever may chance to be in actual control.

Not so long since there was much talk of a real or supposed “submerged tenth.” How far off, at present, is the period of the unsubmerged tenth — or even tenth of the tenth?

We have said that the two types of crime — those of greed and those of resentment — are complementary the one of the other. To which we have now to add that the general resentment against corporate greed is the main-spring of anarchy, of communism, of socialism — these, of whatever degree, being quite frankly materialistic in their estimate of the real basis and meaning of human existence.

So long, then, as our faith has for its ultimate aim salvation by natural forces, so long as our creed is that of mere having and getting, so long as we believe only in the purely economic interpretation of history, we seem to have no other choice than that between materialistic autocracy on the one hand and still more frankly materialistic socialism on the other.¹

For the present, indeed, the “choice” would seem to be

¹ So far as the present writer is able to judge, the keenest, most dispassionate, most thorough-going critical analysis of socialism that has yet appeared is contained in Emil Faguet's *Le Socialisme in 1907*.

made; and that fairly beyond recall. Plutocracy is undeniably in possession, incomparably astute, highly organized, formidable in always and rapidly increasing degree. On the other hand, Socialism is in exile from the Holy Land of Fact, and so is free to picture by the mouth of its own peculiar prophets, the splendors of that radically materialistic New Jerusalem which it has no doubt of establishing when once the period of its exile is ended. Beyond question, too, contentment will there reign supreme. As Schaeffle assures us, the whole socialistic scheme for the reconstruction of human society has its actual focus in one elementary question—that of the stomach. And of course in the socialistic New Jerusalem all stomachs will be forever full (and none ever sour).

At the present moment, then, the general drift may be said to be fairly clear. Whichever version, plutocratic or socialistic, may in the end be the authorized one, the new creed assures us that whatever salvation man may sanely hope for is to be attained only through the media of physical forces.

But what is the nature of the salvation offered? Salvation from what, to what? To which the answer manifestly is: From an empty stomach to a full stomach; from craving of the senses to cloying of the senses. And what have we here but the auto-frenzied form of the sane desire to grasp and comprehend space; wine-supper-frenzied form of the same desire to assimilate the world; erotic-frenzied form of the same predisposition toward continuance of the species.

But perhaps we are suffering from illusion. According to well-known sociologists we are only just now approaching a great period of "Emancipation"—emancipation from superstitious belief in the "Beyond;" emancipation from the illusion of self-depriving, self-torturing asceticism; emancipation from complex barbarous traditional sanctions of the marriage bond hedging the way against "affinities." To have done with all such survivals from the childhood of the world is one of the most essential articles in the new, enlightened creed which proclaims to us that "now" indeed is the day of the one altogether non-mythic salvation; namely, the salvation attainable from day to

day through the application of natural forces to the end of gratifying natural desires.

Well, and what then? How am I to render those forces effective toward my own individual "salvation?" And the answer of the age is: "Call to your aid the almighty Dollar; or even, beyond that, the super-almighty Eagle." And who will presume to doubt the truth and the worth of such formula? Even the serenely-dreaming Buddhist has, not merely his Nirvana, his Perfect; but also his Paranirvana, his — well, Pluperfect. And if, after all, as Buddhistic pessimism would logically require, Nirvana really does mean "blown out," "extinguished;" then our newly enlightened creed merely bids us hasten Nirvanaward the dollar way, or even the eagle way toward Paranirvana; the latter (in this case) only meaning extinction attained in a flash, at a date correspondingly earlier; or, may be, with appropriately long-drawn monotony — roof-garden way, or Sing-Sing way.

The general drift of the current is less and less to be mistaken. Meanwhile, from the book of Daniel onward, still more from the time of Augustine's *Civitas Dei*, some sort of effort has all along been made to seize and estimate in its wholeness the vast, continuous current of struggle and achievement on the part of humanity. A hundred years ago it was the fashion to write (if the plural is admissible) "philosophies of history." In our own day the dominance of industrial and commercial interests finds its own characteristic form of utterance in the economic estimate of the whole course of human development.² Beyond which is the still more ambitious effort in the direction of summing up all essential evolutionary aspects of the associated forms of human life within the compass of a new science, announced as "Sociology." Which science, nevertheless, is as yet so new that, by admission of some of its best known adherents, its definition up to the present hour has hardly advanced beyond the name. As for "Sociology," therefore, it would seem that the primary question: Whether it is? can

² See Seligman's *Economic Interpretation of History* for a brief but solid exposition of this point of view.

not be said to be definitely answered; much less such questions as: What it is, how it is, and what its real worth is — if it is at all.

What is of interest to us here, however, is the undeniably materialistic tone of the deliverances on the part of the explorers of this, as yet, No-man's-land. In a word, however far those deliverances are of the nature of reflections *upon* the character and the drift of civilization in general, they are still more to be looked upon as reflections *of* the actual present materialistic drift.³

It seems, then, that men of the scientific habit of mind whose temperament predisposes them to investigations within this sphere are still groping for the really central characteristics, and still more for the general drift, of present-day civilization. On the other hand, certain minds of poetic gift have, with more or less precision, each in his own way, seized the clue and with greater or less degree of conscious purpose creatively set it forth in artistic form. Free, at least in most cases, from the "bias" of a preconceived system (into which the professional philosopher always tends to force the facts of history) the occasional man who, possessed of literary training, happens also to have the gift of genius, merely looks on, discerns the inmost throbbings of a given period of the total course of social evolution, seizes the features truly characteristic of that period, frees them from non-essential features, portrays in all the simplicity of their organic union those recognized as vital, and, in so doing, renders vividly visible to all the full swing of the inner, life-producing — or, if so it be, life-destroying — forces whose workings determine the period both in its actual character and in its ultimate outcome. Nor, as but now suggested, has the present era failed of such representation.

Let us avail ourselves, then, of certain of these artistic pro-

³ For example, see Ward's *Psychic Factors of Civilization* and his *Applied Sociology*. So also Brinton's posthumous work, *Basis of Social Organization*. Which latter, indeed, is rather an attempt, in brief compass, toward outlining Ethnic Psychology — that other science still in the early stages of its evolution — in a way contrasting somewhat strongly with the general scheme of Wundt's voluminous, fairly cyclopedic treatise (not yet completed).

ducts as aids to the better understanding of our theme. And, first of all, there is the evil dream (*mauvais rêve*) with which Renan declared himself⁴ to be now and then disturbed.

It is the dream that, sometime in the future, authority may attain such degree of centralization as to have at its disposition the very inferno itself; not the mere chimerical inferno of the ordinary myth, but one wholly real, with actual tangible media of torture. Its masters will be positivistic tyrants and will have little scruple in making use of obedient, machine-like beings wholly free from shrinkings of the moral sort and ready for any and every ferocity. Human forces will thus be gathered in very few hands. They will in fact have become the possession of a League; the League having the power of disposing of the very existence of the planet itself and of terrorizing the world with this menace. Indeed the day in which a few, specially gifted with intelligence, shall possess the means of destroying the planet, their sovereignty will be established; such privileged ones will reign by absolute terror, since they will have in their hands the existence of all; we might almost say that they will be gods and that the theological state dreamed of by the poet for primitive humanity will in fact be fulfilled.

Primus in orbe deos fecit timor.

Thus far Renan's own words, here somewhat freely translated. But, as Lemaitre points out, this dream involved a curious inconsistency. It pleased the mood of Renan to assume that these future possessors of absolute power will be good. This notwithstanding the fact that their rule is also assumed to be based on their actual possession of planet-annihilating forces, which they deliberately hold in reserve for the express purpose of terrorizing the world into unresisting obedience!

"*Mauvais rêve*" truly; even veritable "*reverie maladif*."

And yet, a full generation before the dreaming of this unhealthy, and thus far inartistic, dream by one of the foremost

⁴In his *Dialogues Philosophiques*; these, indeed, being characterized on the whole as *reveries malades* by no less a critic than Jules Lemaitre (*Les Contemporains*, Sixieme Serie, 11th edition, 265). For what is here presented concerning Renan's "Evil Dream," as well as for what is presently to follow concerning Lamartine's elaborate "vision," I am directly and mainly indebted to Lemaitre (same volume, 180 ff.).

literary artists of the nineteenth century, the same general vision of human rulers,—in this case they are “giants,” even “titans,” “*hommes-dieux*”—wielding absolute powers, was wrought out to really consistent artistic conclusion. This was done in one of the strangest of poems,⁵ the object of which is two-fold: On the one hand “to relate to us the expiatory incarnations of the ‘hero’ of this vast poem which ought to be called “*The Visions*,” on the other, to portray “one of the periods of the history of humanity,” namely “the antediluvian period.” It is of course the latter aspect of the poem alone which can be of interest to us in the present connection.

Even so, our interest has its basis in what, on the surface, seems a strange inconsistency in the poem itself; an inconsistency which in fact has not passed without strong condemnation. In a word, Lamartine has set side by side in the same period two civilizations which in actual historic sequence must imply “centuries and centuries” of separation. That is, while one of these civilizations is the pastoral-nomadic, with all its characteristic limitations, the other is “highly civilized and learned.”

Nevertheless, while other critics have found this juxtaposition singular and absurd, Lemaitre pronounces the anachronism to be “admirable, altogether full of fine moral sense, more true even than reality, than history.” And why? Because this “higher” civilization is purely industrial. It is a civilization of mere “panmechanism.” In which character it has become a “scientific aristocracy” which is “horribly unjust and pitiless.” These human gods have practically working air-ships. They have a superior, fairly titanic, architecture. But also, on occasions of festivities, the decorations of their vast halls consist of multitudes of nude human beings. They have a drama. It is

⁵ *La Chute d'un Ange*, by Lamartine, constituting an “episode” of a more extended work. Of this particular poem Lemaitre sums up his judgment as follows: “C’est le plus inégal des poèmes, le plus baroque, le plus fou, le plus puéril, le plus ennuyeux, le plus assommant, le plus mal écrit,—et le plus suave et le plus inspiré et le plus grand, selon les heures.” And, as we may add, the key to this inequality is given by Lamartine himself in a single sentence of his preface to the first edition of the poem: “La poésie n’est que ce qui dé orde du calice humaine”—the cream of the foam, as chance may be, of human existence. There is a reprint as late as 1907.

hilarious comedy for the spectators, but for the actors (who know not that — much less what — they are “playing”) literal tragedy; living and dead at the close of the play being cast to the lions. The life of these despot-gods (*tyrans-dieux*) is lascivious, obscene, atrocious.

True, by referring to the far-distant future his evil dream of men become gods — having at their disposal and, for the intimidation of the world, remorselessly using, all the powers and instrumentalities of an actual inferno (satanic gods, after all, therefore) — Renan, on first glance, would seem wholly consistent with the logic of history. On the other hand, Lamartine’s “anachronism” is merely superficial, while in the deepest sense of the term his representation is just and “historical.” Of the two civilizations which he boldly assigns to the same era, the one is extremely primitive; the other, highly, “advanced.” But in truth the one is no less godless than the other. Together they are “only two forms of the same barbarism.” Indeed, “of the two, the second is worse than the first.”

In such imagery, therefore, Lamartine would seem to set forth and give striking emphasis to this conviction, namely: “That what is decorated with the name of progress by the illusion of certain positivists [we may now say: sociologists] and by the greater part of our politicians [in America no less than in France] — the progress, namely, of the sciences and particularly of physics, of chemistry and of mechanics applied to industry — is not to be confounded with moral progress, nor even with advance in well-being on the part of the greater number; is indeed not progress at all.”

Nor can it be too strongly insisted upon that all “advance” in a civilization purely industrial is, for mankind in general, actual retrogression. It is merely the multiplication of media for “satisfying” greed, which in truth is insatiable; greed of power, greed of possession, greed of the mere senses; the end of all which is despotism, selfishness, shamelessness on the part of the powerful few and, in the outcome, abject submission and degradation on the part of the helpless many. Logically, it seems “that the last word of a civilization purely materialistic must be the oppression of the weak by the strong.”

By all means, however, let us note that in truth the distinction is not between rich *men* and poor *men*; but between *rich* men and *poor* men; remembering meanwhile that every day recruits are crossing the line from each of these classes to the other. Still further, if I am not mistaken, there is a general conviction among wage-earners that no "boss," no super-man (*Ueberschensch*), no despot-god (*tyran-dieu*), is so much to be dreaded as just the poor-man suddenly become rich-man.

We have been dwelling for a moment upon Lamartine's now more than half-century-old "*vision monstrueuse* of the city of Balbeck;" this vision being "quite simply the enlarged picture of the supreme industrial city." In its general character, indeed, we may fairly look upon the vision as a case of clairvoyance. But also, and partly because of what may be called the clairvoyant habit of mind of its author, the vision for us to-day seems to hover in the air as something having little connection with present reality.

In truth, the literary genius who was really to seize the essential characteristics of the now passing era and portray the actual movements through which those characteristics, by fairly irresistible impulse, are attaining their own specific form, must have lived in the midst of the events of the last half—above all of the last quarter-century. He must have been in the current, yet not of it; outside it, yet near enough for exactest observation. And in fact that genius has appeared in the person of Anatole France.

Not that this writer is alone in his effort to seize and portray in art-form, the general drift of present-day civilization. Zola, in his formidable, sombre trilogy: *Lourde*, *Rome*, *Paris*, had wrought out a vast and vivid representation of the irrepressible conflict between the old, ossified, powerfully resisting, yet slowly crumbling forms, and the new, swiftly developing material aspects of modern life. But also in doing this he fell in with the materialistic gospel.

In contrast with Zola's mood the brilliant cynic, Anatole France, takes up the theme from the point of view of a wholly disinterested, even mocking, observer. From which point of view he has portrayed, in sardonic satire, the main current of

French history with its culmination in those peculiarly sinister features which characterize the whole of modern cosmopolitan self-consuming life.

This he has done in that marvellous book, *L'Ile des Pingouins*, published toward the close of 1907. The work is a "history;" hence requires a "preface." Of this the opening words (in English equivalent) are as follows: "In spite of the seeming diversity of the amusements which appear to attract me, my life has one only object. It is bent wholly toward accomplishing one great purpose. I write the history of the Penguins."

The "preface" itself turns out to be an account of his own pretended naïve appeals for aid to authors of experience and repute in the various fields of historical research. He is assured that the only way to successful authorship here is, simply to set out the facts and let these speak for themselves; or, again, to "copy the best-known writers, according to usage." Novelties are "impertinences" which the reader always resents. "The letter alone is appreciable and definite," the spirit being neither. One must indeed be vain to really write history. For that he must have imagination.

Last of all, concerning the art of the Penguins he appeals to "le regretté M. Fulgence Tapir . . . a little man merveilleusement myope," but with a fairly miraculous nose, able always and everywhere to smell out the essence of beauty. The little man's study is crammed with documents. To these the visitor is cordially given full access. Mounted on a ladder he opens a packet. Instantly the contents, released, spring apart, expand, fly wildly about, jostle other packets, the contents of which give terrifying proof of the same strange quality. In a moment the whole room is flooded, Fulgence Tapir being once for all submerged and hopelessly extinguished; the visitor himself escaping the same fate only by a leap from the ladder through the topmost pane of the window. Awful warning, as may be added, of possible catastrophe to the original-research man in whatever documentary field.

Spite of all discouragements, the "history" is pushed forward and brought to completion. And, like every history, its earlier

portions are full of marvels. With these, indeed — how, outwitted by the devil (“who is a great theologian”), the holy man Saint Maël (at ninety-seven years of age) is turned aside from intended renewal of missionary labors and driven by evil winds to missionary labors unintended, being led to mistake the penguins of an ice-covered island for men, preaching to them and baptizing them; how news of this brought embarrassment to Paradise; how, in a great council there of all the theologians of the early Church, the divine decree was reached that (after being rebuked for his blunder) Saint Maël should be authorized and empowered to change the penguins into men; how, after this was done, the holy man, seated in his miraculous granite skiff, by means of a slender cord, towed the island safely, with its newly transformed inhabitants, to the shores of the Bretons; how those inhabitants, losing their penguin dress, became humanly clothed, entered upon deadly strife, established property rights through simple brute force, founded a state upon the principle that that alone is respectable which compels itself to be respected — with all this we are not here concerned beyond the fact that under such cover, there is presented to our minds the actual process leading up to the French Revolution; that prodigious crucible in which the social media of Europe were once for all brought into a state of fusion ready to be cast in molds new and radically different.

It is, in fact, in the economic aspect of the Revolution that we find the first connecting link between this “history” and our present theme. After the confiscation of the estates of the nobles and of the clergy “the bourgeois and the peasants,” as our “historian” expresses it, “judged that revolution was good for the acquiring of lands and bad for keeping them.”⁶

Hence their willing submission to the strong government of “Trinco.” True, in the outcome Trinco left Pingouinie impoverished and reduced in population. . . . “After his fall there remained in our country only the deformed and the halting, from whom we are descended. But he gave us *gloire*, for which a people

⁶Concerning the economic changes wrought by the Revolution, see a series of essays by specialists published under the title: *Oeuvre sociale de la Revolution Francaise*.

never pays too dearly." Such the assurance given to a student of peoples in general who has come from a far distant land for the purpose of learning the precise truth concerning the Penguins.

The period succeeding Trinco's glorious rule was one of unparalleled vicissitudes, the very memory of which has grown dim. In the outcome, however, new social media began to appear. A republic was finally formed. In real fact, however, "the Penguin democracy was not self-governing; it obeyed a financial oligarchy which gave shape to public opinion by means of journals and held in its hand the deputies, the ministers and the president. It held sovereign control of the finances of the republic and determined the foreign policy of the country."

And here, in truth, our "historian" puts his finger on the key to the whole actual present-day condition of things. Government has ceased, or is rapidly ceasing, to be based upon manhood. Its real basis is, with less and less disguise, money.

Nevertheless, government on such materialistic basis involves its own peculiar self-contradiction. Surrounded by armed and hostile empires, the money-ruled Penguin "republic" was compelled by the law of self-preservation to provide itself — like every people — with "the foremost army of the world" and at least the second navy. To maintain which armament, however, the burden of taxation became insupportable — insupportable, that is, to all save the rich. These, without murmur, accepted the new condition because they saw in army and navy the means not merely of protecting their actual possessions, but also of extending their markets and acquiring new territories; media, that is, for still vaster having and getting.

To this condition of things some of the middle class, including many men of the various professions, resigned themselves as to the inevitable; while others impatiently dreamed of universal disarmament. Among the latter was the illustrious Professor Obnubile. For sixty years he had confined himself to his laboratory where no sound from the outside world could penetrate.

From which point of vantage he saw with perfect clearness that war is wholly barbaric. Equally clear was his conviction

that the spirit of the great industrial democracies is necessarily pacific. The science of political economy puts that beyond all dispute. Indeed this pacific spirit could not long fail to impress itself even upon the autocrats of finance. A great turning point in the history of humanity was certainly approaching.

Moved by this revelation, Professor Obnubile resolved upon observing for himself the actual disposition of peoples. And of course he began his studies with the greatest of democracies, the Nouvelle-Atlantide. From Titanport where he had landed he made his way to Gigantopolis, capital of the country. Accompanied by an interpreter he visited the Parliament, the first striking feature of which was that of the members sitting in cane chairs and resting their feet on their desks.

To the amazement of Doctor Obnubile the business, conducted by the president — the members scarcely taking note — consisted in rapidly disposing, in merest routine fashion, of bills of expense for successful wars waged solely for the winning of markets, and in the declaration of still other wars for the same purpose. Being assured that this was the ordinary business of the Parliament, Professor Obnubile, head pressed between hands, reflected bitterly: "Since wealth and civilization involve as many causes of war as do poverty and barbarism, since the folly and wickedness of men are incurable, there remains one good deed to accomplish. The wise man will accumulate enough of dynamite to explode this planet."

It is the first note of that sort in the "history of the Penguins." One thinks of Renan's *mauvais rêve*, and also of the life-long search for a super-explosive, to a similar purpose, by the chemist in that terribly earnest three-fold work of Zola's already referred to. The evil dream haunts the mind of the vengeful dreamer as a way of speeding the end. Before the minds of more sober men it hovers as a menace.

We have said that crime has for its motive either greed or vengeance. We may now add that our modern materialistic civilization is developing each of these motives by means of all the subtlest appliances and methods of science. So too our civilization is putting in practice, on a scale always increasingly

colossal, the first motive, thus inviting the putting in practice of the second on a scale not less colossal.

And this, as an actual ultimate outcome of present conditions, our "history" already foreshadows. Under guise of the mocking, Aristophanic spectator, its writer sees all questions of State, all questions of public and private justice, all questions of domestic honor, merged even at the present moment in questions of mere personal interest—gratification of mere senseless hatreds (as in case of "Pyrot"—evidently Dreyfus), of mere sordid greed, of mere individual vanities, of mere brutish lusts.

Even so the gospel of salvation by natural forces is in course of giving rise to new and strange asceticisms. In the coming time there will be the billionaire immured in his office by day and by night, subsisting on eggs and milk, sleeping in a hammock. Surrounded with electric apparatus he will have no other occupation than to push with his finger a nickel button. Such mystics of the all-sufficient dollar cult "will pile up riches of which they will never see even the signs, and acquire the vain possibility of satisfying desires which they will never experience."

Indeed the class is increasing of whose members it may be said, "Since they employ all their intelligence in affairs, they have no inclination for the pleasures of the mind." In former times wealth meant leisure. In those days the theatre was a powerful medium of intellectual stimulation and refinement of taste, the leisured class liberally supporting it and worthily drawing full benefit therefrom. It is no longer so. Already it is evident that the theatre of the future (in *Pingouinie*) will yield to the requirement of over-wrought nerves and benumbed intelligence so far as to substitute negro songs, jugglers' tricks, and the tumblings and contortions of clowns in place of the actual drama and opera. More than that; the final stage, presaging total extinction, will consist in the passing and re-passing across the stage of actresses gleaming from head to foot with diamonds, and of actors bearing on their shoulders huge bars of gold—unless, let us add, unless, through gladiatorial atrocities and Neronian orgies, it should linger and finally

descend to the level of the theatre of Balbeck as this appears to us in the "*vision monstrueuse*" of Lamartine.

According to our "history," however, the general drift is overwhelmingly in one direction; the direction being that of subordinating every interest to the one supreme end of increasing and of hoarding wealth. In the approaching era all passions prejudicial to this all-absorbing purpose will be held in dishonor; while everything resembling pity will appear only as a "dangerous weakness."

As for social media, all these will be "subordinated to the trusts," while the State will "rest firmly upon two great public virtues: respect for the rich and contempt for the poor."

Meanwhile hereditary nervous disorders tend to increase on the part of the rich, and general enfeeblement of mind and body on the part of the poor. In the coming time this latter will be accelerated among the industrial class by two artificial causes. The state will drain off the most robust for the army, the demoralizing influences in which will cause their speedy decay. On the other hand employers will take increasing care to eliminate "workmen with a too lucid brain" and will "employ by preference operatives who are illiterate and stupid."

Still further, by reckless chemical syntheses the food-trusts will manufacture artificial wines, meat, milk, fruits, vegetables; whence multiplied disorders of stomach and brain.

As the vision progresses misery is manifest everywhere. Socialism dreams of power, and is powerless. Arrogant wealth and frantic poverty meet and clash in strikes and lock-outs. Chemists, become frenzied anarchists, create new, diabolical explosives. Mercantile sky-scrapers, parliamentary houses, theatres, with whole neighborhoods of living human beings—mostly pent-up throngs of wretched poor—heave, toss, and sink in smoking, blackened, bloody ruins. No churches are included. They would seem to have long-since ceased to exist.

The natural end of the gospel of salvation by natural forces has come.

The "History of the Penguins" is of course first of all a work of art. Its form, besides, is that of Rabelaisian mockery. On first view, and especially in the earlier portions, the author

seems to be merely amusing himself in recklessly cynical fashion; to be simply "sitting in the seat of the scornful."

Nevertheless, we may safely say that all this mockery is but an iridescent play on the surface of a deep-running current of serious purpose. *L'Île des Pingouins* really is a history — a history in transparent symbol, of French, — nay, of all civilization; a history such as only a man of highly-creative genius could write. Indeed, precisely that mocking irony which has become so pronounced a habit of the mind of Anatole France is manifestly one of the clarifying factors through which he has been able to seize so exactly the essential features of the actual course of events and to set this forth with such vividness that he who runs may read.

But we must not leave without notice one further feature of this notable 'history.' It is that the artist-instinct of the author could not permit him to terminate his work with a mere heap of ruins. By that instinct — long since grown completely conscious with him, as a matter of course — he was led to extend his vision into "the future times," far beyond the general convulsive crumbling of a self-dissolved world. In the course of ages the countries, once so densely peopled, so resplendent with the "higher civilization," now long since become a vast, unwholesome wilderness, are again taken possession of, first by savage hunters, again by tillers of the soil. Afterward come, one after another, hordes of barbarian invaders, conquering and reconquering the country — in short, a new Middle Age, followed by a new Modern Time.

Along with which the closing chapter of the book bears a sub-title which sets one thinking. That sub-title is: *L'Histoire sans fin*. From which one can only infer that Anatole France conceives of human history as a process forever repeating itself in cycles — after the fashion of the world-order as conceived by the stoics — the end of civilization being in each case a vast cataclysmic dissolution and return to the savage beginning.

And so he, too, in his own peculiar way, seems to accept as final the materialistic view of human life and human destiny, the cycles of which for him thus constitute one endless round of mocking illusion. Whence it would seem that the irony of

Anatole France only reflects what to him is the infinite irony of fate.

In former works he had represented specific phases of the general drift. In the "history of the Penguins" he sets forth, in his own inimitable way, his completed view of the current as a whole. In this total current is found, according to this view, the one real meaning of human existence — each individual a bubble on the surface, an infinitesimal momentary throb in the vast cyclic pulse-beat of the endlessly self-repeating whole. The mainspring of human nature is greed. But having and getting on the part of one involves deprivation on the part of many — and, through the passions thus awakened, the deprivation of all.

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, saith the new preacher not less than the old. And, if there is no other salvation than that to which natural forces are the only means, then the nullity-facing message of the pessimistic preacher of whatever age is the truth for all time.

Nevertheless, the sardonic humor of the self-poised Anatole France looking on at the vast panorama of human existence sweeping forward, with its two complementary crime-crammed aspects of greed and of vengeance, to foredoomed final catastrophe — that humor is itself a proof of profoundest disappointment with the whole.

If, instead of an Anatole France, it be a Louis XV of finance who attains a glimpse of the general drift, he may be heard to murmur in his own appropriate mood "After us the deluge." If again the individual happens to be a genius of the gutter, there will come from him a wail like that exquisite, untranslatable rhythmic echo of delirium by Paul Verlaine; heart wounded with dreary languor by long-drawn sobs of the violins of autumn; recall of the earlier days, with tears; drifting; borne, now here, now there, by evil winds, like withered leaves.

If for the outcome of our existence we have no other resources than those set forth in the characteristically "modern" Gospel of Force, then, according to our "temperament," we will scoff; or grunt, and turn again to our wallow; or wail in mere helpless terror — with one only solace; the hopeless hope

that "to-morrow" the possibility even of a *mauvais rêve* will have ceased.

Pehaps, even yet, we may weary of the frenzy of mere having and getting — and losing — and come to consider with seriousness the possibility of a super-material salvation by spiritual forces; accepting which we may not merely avoid the cataclysmic plunge toward which the present order of things is inevitably tending, but attain instead a civilization really worthy of a being who is able to see within himself at least the germ of actual divine Sonship.

WILLIAM M. BRYANT.

Webster Groves, Missouri.